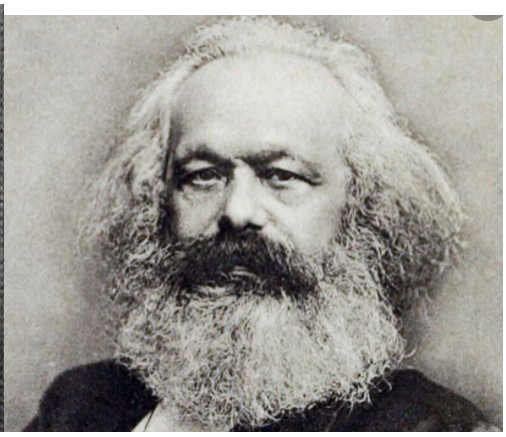
HIST 305 Reading Histories of Work
Spring 2021
Prof. Lora Wildenthal
MW 8-9:20

7 April Revision! -- cuts very last reading



Why are men more associated with work, even though women have always worked?

What constitutes slavery...and what is free and not so free about free labor?

Course description: Work in the modern world is about earning a living, identity, creativity, morality, and much more. This course emphasizes discussion and writing about a common set of assigned readings. We read Adam Smith, Karl Marx, and other classic texts on work as well as important recent monographs on the experiences and meanings of work. The authors and settings of our readings are mostly European, but also extend to the Americas and other colonial and postcolonial societies since 1492. This class is useful for students who are pre-law, pre-HUM grad, or interested in economics or social theory.

How to contact me Email is best: wildenthal@rice.edu My cell phone number is 832 975 9005. My "office hours"—a drop-in time when you can talk to me without making any appointment—are **Fridays 2-4 p.m.** For now, that is Zoom only. The link is in our Canvas site. If things get better, I will come to campus for those who may wish to meet face to face, and I can meet on Zoom from there too. I won't be on campus at other times, however, so don't waste your time looking for me at my office at other times. You are welcome to stay on Zoom after class to talk if that is a good time for you.

Course objectives and learning outcomes Successful students will:

- gain facility with evaluating a workplace (e.g. nature of work tasks, control over the work process, skill, certification, authority, implicit as well as explicit expectations, discipline and coercion, forms of pay).
- become familiar with long-term transformations of work under expanding and intensifying industrial capitalism since the 17th century, across the regions of Europe as well as between Europe and in European colonial empires in the 19th century
- become familiar with the concepts and arguments of two major theorists of capitalism who were observing that transformation, Adam Smith and Karl Marx
- gain facility with comparing work in 20th-century capitalist and state socialist (communist) countries

Overview of assignments These are geared to support the extensive reading in this class and require no outside research. You have grading rubrics for all assignments.

Assignment 1 One page of notes for each film or reading/ set of readings (we have 19, if you count by specific class period for which you need to do some new viewing or reading). To be organized according to a template tailored to our class and due at the beginning of class. Each is worth .03%, and together they total 60% of the course grade. This will give everyone a common preparation for class discussions. **Note: You are always welcome to read *half* of the assigned reading**, if your time does not permit you to read all of it. Just take your notes on that half. "Half" can be any portion or portions of the assigned reading for that day—I suggest the beginning, end, and something that grabs your eye from the middle. In the funny math of reading challenging texts, half is infinitely better than none!

Assignment 2 Two short essays. For each one, choose an assigned reading/film of your choice (we have 11, if you count by author/ director) to review for yourself and then analyze in an essay that is ca. 1,000 words long. No outside research; you can draw on your notes and anything said by anyone in class. You will do each in a draft version (5%) and final version (5%). The two different essays in their draft and final versions total 20% of the course grade.

Assignment 3 A draft version of an essay (ca. 2,500 words, 8%), short presentation (4%), and a final version of essay (ca. 2,500 words, 8%) on a collection of 3-5 media clippings to be gathered

by you on a work-related issue/ problem/ question of your choice. Requires no outside research other than collecting the media clippings, but the essay should draw upon any relevant assigned reading, and the presentation may but is not required to do so (due to your time constraints there). You will turn in the draft essay and make the presentation at the scheduled final exam, and turn in the final version on the last day of finals. *There is a slight risk that the Registrar's Office will schedule our final very close to the last day of finals...let's keep our eye on that.*

Required Readings

Books for purchase (in the order in which we will read them). These are ordered at the campus bookstore. I am not placing anything on reserve at Fondren.

In the case of the Smith and Marx, make sure to buy the specified edition. *Otherwise, you will be lost when we all turn to the same passage in class.*

Please do not let concerns about the cost of readings drive your decision about whether to stay in the class. *I do want everyone if at all possible to acquire the regular, paper books. These days when we are online for everything, it is all the more important to give our eyes a break from the screen. But if it is hard for you to buy all these books, even at used etc. prices (abebooks is a favorite source of mine), I am really hoping you will contact me, because it is not hard for me to find extra copies to lend, etc. I can't do it for every single student, but I can definitely do it for some. So do not hesitate.*

Smith, Adam. An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations. Edited by Edwin Cannan. With a preface by George Stigler. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977. Facsimile of 1904 edition. ISBN-13: 978-0226763743 **Please buy this edition only!** Caution if you do not use the campus bookstore: Amazon seems not to carry it. Try abebooks—they have used versions for cheap.

Marx, Karl. Capital. Translated by Ben Fowkes. With an introduction by Ernest Mandel. Rpt. New York/ London: Penguin, 1992. ISBN-13: 978-0140445688 **Please buy this edition only!** The Kindle version is not much cheaper, and it will not have the right pagination!

Rose, Sonya. Limited Livelihoods. Gender and Class in Nineteenth-Century England. Rev. ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993. ISBN-13: 978-0520074798

Article-length readings—(in the order in which we will read them). These are pdfs posted for you on Canvas.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels, The Communist Manifesto. In The Marx-Engels Reader. Ed. Robert C. Tucker. 2nd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978. Pp. 473-491. (= Preamble and Chapters 1 and 2 only).

Haraszti, Miklós. A Worker in a Worker's State. Piece-Rates in Hungary. Trans. Michael Wright. London: Penguin Books and New Left Review, 1977. Pp. 1, 22-29, 35-41, 98-105, 125-137.

Burawoy, Michael. "Piece Rates Hungarian Style." In On Work. Historical, Comparative and Theoretical Approaches, 210-228. Ed. R. Pahl. Oxford: Blackwell, 1988.

Sahlins, Marshall. "The Original Affluent Society," in: idem, Stone Age Economics. With a New Foreword by David Graeber, pp. 1-37. Milton Park: Routledge, 2017. We will also read from the same edition these short introductory essays: David Graeber's Foreword to the 2017 edition (pp. ix-xviii), Sahlins's original Introduction to *Stone Age Economics* (pp. xxvii-xxx), and Sahlin's Preface to a 2003 edition of *Stone Age Economics* (pp. xix-xxiv).

Anderson, Elizabeth. "Liberty, Equality, and Private Government." The Tanner Lectures in Human Values, Princeton 2015. Pp. 1-67. Obtained from https://tannerlectures.utah.edu/**.**

~~Weeks, Kathi. "Introduction: The Problem with Work." In idem, The Problem with Work. Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011. Pp. 1-36.~~

Films—these will be stream-able from Canvas/ Fondren. You will watch them outside of class (and take notes on them), and we will discuss them in class.

Modern Times. Dir. Charlie Chaplin. USA. 1936. 87 min.
Can be streamed from Fondren: search at library.rice.edu by title and choose the item with Paulette Goddard's name.

The Global Assembly Line. Dir. Lorraine Gray. USA. 1986. 58 min. This is in the Media Gallery on our Canvas course site.

Schedule of Class Meetings

Week 1 How do narratives shape what we think about work?
Monday, 25 January
Introductions

What does work mean to you and to other people? What has work been like in the past, and what meanings did people find in it then? How resistance and emotion have shaped that inquiry...

Our question for this week and next: How does narrative (esp. a happy ending, whatever that may be) affect what we think of work?

What institutions and organizations are relevant to the world of work?

The value of the "stupid question"

Wednesday, 27 January

Discuss *Modern Times*

Week 2 A Famous Narrative

Monday, 1 February

Discuss *Communist Manifesto*

Wednesday, 3 February

Discuss *Communist Manifesto*

Week 3 Conflicting Narratives

Monday, 8 February

Discuss *The Global Assembly Line*

Wednesday, 10 February

Discuss *The Global Assembly Line*

Week 4 ***Let's pretend this week never happened!!***

~~**Monday, 15 February**~~

~~**Wednesday, 17 February**~~

~~NO CLASS – "sprinkle day"~~

Week 5 Adam Smith's narrative regarding the division of labor and on wages, prices, and profits

Monday, 22 February

Smith, Book I, chapters 1-3 (pp. 7-25) and chapters 5-6 (pp. 34-61) ***This is last week's assignment, just moved a week later. If you have turned in your notes, you are good. I have also moved the deadline to today if you want to revise at all and re-post but you do NOT have to!***

Wednesday, 24 February

Continue discussion of Smith—recap and preparation for last part, and discussion of Assignment 2 essay

Week 6 Adam Smith on wages, prices, and profits, continued

This week you will turn in 2 homeworks: the one originally due on 22 Feb (chapter 8 [pp. 72-97]), and the one originally due on 3 March

Monday 1 March

NO CLASS – "sprinkle day"

Wednesday, 3 March

Discuss Smith, Chapter 8 (pp. 72-97) and Chapter 10 (pp. 111-160)—***This is the same reading assignment as originally, just delayed until today. You are WELCOME to read half. Half-read with concentration is* better *than all of it having been read with tiredness and distraction.***

Sunday, 7 March

Turn in draft of first 1,000-word essay (Assignment 2) by midnight

Week 7 Marx on commodities, labor, and value

Monday, 8 March

Lecture: What a commodity is and where profits come from, according to Marx

Wednesday, 10 March

Discuss Marx, Part II, Chapter 6 (pp. 270-280); Part III, Chapter 7 (pp. 283-306)

Week 8 Marx on the experience of work

Monday, 15 March

Discuss Marx, Part III, Chapter 10 (pp. 340-416)

Wednesday, 17 March

Continue discussion of Marx, Part III, Chapter 10 (pp. 340-416)

~~**Friday, 19 March**~~

~~Turn in final version of first 1,000-word essay (Assignment 2) by midnight~~

Week 9 Marx on the experience of work, continued

Monday, 22 March

Discuss Marx, Part IV, Chapter 15 (pp. 492-639)

Wednesday, 24 March

Recap Marx; lecture: State socialisms

NEW DEADLINE: Turn in final version of first 1,000-word essay (Assignment 2) by midnight

Week 10 Work in Real Existing Socialism

Monday, 29 March

Discuss selections from Haraszti, *A Worker in a Worker's State. Piece-Rates in Hungary* (pp. 1, 22-29, 35-41, 98-105, 125-137)

Wednesday, 31 March

Discuss Burawoy, "Piece Rates Hungarian Style" (pp. 210-228)

Week 11 Affluence outside of capitalism or socialism?

Monday, 5 April

Discuss Sahlins, "The Original Affluent Society" (pp. 1-37)

Wednesday, 7 April

Discuss Graeber, "Foreword" (pp. ix-xviii), Sahlins, "Preface" (pp. xix-xxiv), and Sahlins, "Introduction" (pp. xxvii-xxx)

~~**Friday, 9 April**~~

~~Turn in draft of second 1,000-word essay (Assignment 2) by midnight~~

Sunday, 11 April

Turn in draft of second 1,000-word essay (Assignment 2) by midnight

Week 12 Private Government; Gender at Work
Monday, 12 April
Discuss Anderson, first lecture (pp. 63-93)
Wednesday, 14 April
Discuss Anderson, second lecture (pp. 94-122)

Week 13 Gendered divisions of labor
Monday, 19 April
Discuss Rose, Chapters 1, 8 and 2
Wednesday, 21 April
Discuss Rose, Chapters 3 and 4
Friday, 23 April
Turn in final version of second 1,000-word essay (Assignment 2) by midnight

Week 14 Gender, Status and Work
Monday, 26 April
Discuss Rose, Chapters 5 and 6
Wednesday, 28 April
Discuss Rose, Chapter 7

Final exam period = 5-12 May. ~~Our scheduled exam will be set after the semester begins.~~ Our final exam has been scheduled for: **Friday, 7 May, 7-10 p.m.** The draft version of the final paper (ca. 2,500 words) and your presentation (3 minutes) will be due then.

The final version of the essay for Assignment 3 is due via Canvas on **12 May 2021 by 5:00 p.m.**

More information about the class

The **template** for notes is intended to solve the problem of having spent a lot of time completing the reading, but then feeling vague about what it was when class discussion starts.

Class discussion is our main activity. We may use Padlet to allow everyone to post a chosen quotation or other item from their template. Then I will choose someone to start, and that student will make a comment, then choose the next student, who in turn will choose the next, etc. If you want to speak to follow up on someone's comment, use the "raise hand" function or note "Next" in the Chat (depending on class size). This mode of discussion keeps everyone focused on what others have said, rather than relying on the professor to evaluate each comment. I will make some comments at the end of class. Be read to ask each other for

clarification—that is the main obstacle to a flowing discussion. It is fine to take the discussion back to an earlier point or to change the subject at any time. In that way, you can bring out what you want even if the discussion has gone a different way. By the end of class, we do need to have come to common position on what the author's argument is (see template).

Zoom does not have a built-in **attendance** feature. I will try to take attendance soon after discussion starts. However, with connectivity problems etc. it is possible that I could miss you. The best way to make sure that you are counted as present is to speak in class, as class will be recorded (to help those who miss class), and recordings apparently default to speaker view. That will create a record of your presence.

Read on paper, not on the screen, at least some of the time. I hope you will obtain regular paper books, and also print out the shorter readings. That allows you to read without being tied to your computer, reducing eyestrain, and also allows you to mark the reading up easily to help you refer to it in class. If you would like printouts but have no printing capability, talk to me.

Unless you have privately supplied a reason to me why you cannot have your camera on, I will expect you to **keep your camera on during class**. As long as you are clothed and have the camera pointed across at your face, we really don't care if your hair is messy or your eyes look sleepy or you are munching away on your breakfast. Please don't turn the camera off and on for quick things like telling your roommate to be quiet, etc.; just mute your volume. If we call on you and your camera is off and you don't answer, it looks like you were never there in the first place; keeping your camera on while you step away to answer the door or something will keep us from calling on you at exactly that moment! Cameras off, or lots of off and on, make it hard to form a discussion community, because that creates a sense of distance between you and the rest of us who are trying to talk to you, and also because changes are distracting. I think you can perceive the unspoken message of turning off your camera if you imagine the professor turning off her camera every time you speak to her. For those of you who cannot use a camera and have contacted me about that, the above will not work against you, because we will get to know your voice and consistent presence over time very well.

Policies

Attendance Everyone can miss 4 class meetings (= 2 weeks) no questions asked. These are for any and all reasons, including official Rice activities, illness, or just the need for a break. The student does not have to do the assigned reading or notes for the day one of these "freebie" absences is used. The notes that are done will simply be averaged among themselves for that part of the course grade. **Please note:** If you do come to class but don't do the assignment related to that day, I will either count it toward one of your freebie absences or give an F on the assignment—your decision. If it is necessary to miss more than 4 class meetings, the student needs to meet with me one-on-one to discuss missed materials for at least 30 minutes for every class missed. If absences exceed 4 class meetings and student does not arrange makeup

appointments (I may or may not remind the student, but it's not my responsibility!), I will reduce the student's course grade by one letter grade for every additional absence (e.g. if the student were getting an A, then with 5 absences and no makeup discussion the course grade would be a B, with 6 a C, etc.). This is because with *that* many absences, one becomes skeptical about whether the student actually experienced the "same" course.

No late work if you are not absent. This is not because I expect you to be perfect, but because late work drags you down. Done is better than perfect—turn it in and move on. The best thing you can do is to turn your attention to the next assignment, so that it can get done on time.

Grading Each presentation or piece of writing will be graded using only A, B, or C, with no plus or minus. The grading rubrics show the criteria. For your course grade, however, I will use the full range of plus and minus grades, because the rest of Rice does. **So how are those grades of A, B, and C for individual assignments converted into the course grade?** I will turn the letters into numbers: A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, and F = 0. As each assignment component is weighted, the numerical grade is multiplied by its weight percentage (e.g. an A assignment worth 13% of the course grade would be calculated as 4 x .13) and the results are added up to produce a fully weighted course grade. Let's say that the fully weighted numerical course grade is 3.4. How does that become a letter grade to be recorded as your official course grade? 3.4 might turn out to be a B+ or it might be an A-. I will clump together similar numerical course grades and see what things look like. **My grading principle is that like achievements should get like grades.** There is no limit on how many people can get an A or A- or B+, so there is no curve in that sense. But if many students have a course grade of higher than 3.4, and some have grades that are much higher, it is hard to imagine that 3.4 could be an A or A+. A and A+ are the highest grades I have at my disposal, and it probably wouldn't be fair to lump a 3.9 and a 3.4 into the same kind of A. In that sense, there is a curve: others' performance could affect how your performance is judged. Again, I don't want to give like grades to unlike achievements. While there is some uncertainty for you in this system, you should be able to plug in your existing and expected grades to see pretty much where you stand numerically at any time.

What specifications do I want for the writing assignments? Please use 12-size font. Please turn in a regular Word (or .rtf) document rather than a PDF. That makes it easier for me to put comments on the document. However, if you want to handwrite your page of notes, and then pdf it, that is all right.

Any student with a documented **disability** seeking academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain as confidential as possible. Students with disabilities also need to contact Disability Support Services in Allen Center, Room 111 (adarice@rice.edu).

No plagiarism—I am paid to grade YOUR work, not someone else's. All written work must be entirely your own work. Grades are permanent record of your effort, and therefore I take plagiarism seriously. Even if you think you know what is and isn't plagiarism, I ask you to **read**

through the brief Rice document "Academic Fraud and the Honor System," at honor.rice.edu (choose "Honor System Handbook," then "Academic Fraud and the Honor System."